

Largest Ever Area Infrastructure Project Was Set in Motion by Hinchey's 1998 Legislation

Binghamton, NY - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today offered opening remarks at a New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) information session on the details of crucial upgrades planned for the Prospect Mountain and Kamikaze Curve portions of Route 17 in Binghamton. The upgrades, which represent the largest ever federal infrastructure projects in the region, are part of a long term transformation of the roadway into the Interstate Highway system. Hinchey set that transition into motion through legislation which became law in 1998. The latest phase of the project is an example of how federal infrastructure investments can create jobs and benefit the economy.

"In many ways this project represents what Congress could and should be doing to address this nation's infrastructure needs -- while putting Americans back to work," said Hinchey. "Hundreds of jobs are being created by this Prospect Mountain project alone, and more projects like this should be underway throughout the country. Billions of dollars in new economic growth will continue to occur as we strengthen this vital roadway and give area businesses more access to new markets. This work represents one of the largest federal investments ever in the region. Phase I of this project will invest \$135 million in the region and Phase II, expected to start in 2015, will invest an additional \$179 million. The total for Prospect Mountain project is about \$314 million, and it's going to create a lot of good jobs."

In 1993, as a freshman member of Congress, Hinchey began working with the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan to convert the road into an Interstate Highway. In 1998, a Hinchey authored provision in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21 Century (TEA-21) was passed, and Interstate 86 became a part of High Priority Corridor 36, which added Route 17 to the future interstate system. This allowed New York State to begin the conversion of Route 17 to Interstate 86.

Significant progress has been made on the conversion of Route 17 to Interstate 86. The westernmost 177 miles of Route 17, from the Pennsylvania State Line to Exit 48 in East Corning, New York, officially became Interstate 86 on December 3, 1999. An additional 8 mile section of Route 17, from Exit 48 in East Corning, N.Y. to Exit 52 in the village of Horseheads, N.Y., was designated Interstate 86 on January 28, 2004. A 9.9 mile portion of Route 17, from Exit 75 in the Town of Kirkwood, and Exit 79 in the Village of Windsor, Broome County was officially designated Interstate 86 on May 1, 2006.

As part of the I-86 conversion process, NYSDOT is currently planning and designing a major reconstruction project for Prospect Mountain - where NY Route 17 and Interstate 81 meet in the City of Binghamton, from Route 17 Exit 72 (Mygatt Street off-ramp) to Exit 4 (NY 17/I-81 overlap and NY Route 7). It represents one of the largest federal investments ever in the Greater Binghamton area. Phase I will invest \$135 million, and Phase II, expected to start in 2015, will invest \$179 million. The total cost of the Prospect Mountain project is estimated at \$314 million.

As a result of Hinchey's efforts, over half of Route 17 (201 miles) has been designated Interstate 86 since 1999. The work completed to upgrade these sections to acceptable standards included widening shoulders, lengthening deceleration lanes at rest areas, repairing and replacing guide rail and right of way fencing, and removing at-grade intersections to control access to the highway.